

MILE END WEST PROJECT

Progress Report for the Period April 1, 1970 -
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4. Progress Made.

a) The Hellenic Parents and Guardians Federation now has a membership in excess of 3,500 and can correctly claim to be the organization that represents the Greek immigrant population of Montreal. It was the action that asserted this representation that was one of the major developments in the past year indeed it is proving to be the most significant in the history of Montreal's Greek population.

Its significance lies in the fact that for the first time there is an alternative organization to the paternalistic Montreal Hellenic Community. An organization of some 100 wealthy Greek-Canadians that for decades has refused to recognize the plight of the immigrants or involve itself in their problems. Indeed with its emphasis on the fatherland and its glories, the Hellenic Community has acted as a foil to the process of integration into Canadian and Quebec society.

The action that led to the assertion of the immigrants, developed around a request the Parents Federation submitted to the Protestant School Board seeking permission to use classrooms, out of school hours, for Greek language classes. The Board reacting to this 'grass roots' request, invited the Greek Church/Hellenic Community to develop such classes. Despite the considerable pressure that was applied to the parents by teachers, priests and the local media, a move of disgust and anger spread through the immigrant community.

The Parent's Federation publicly declared its opposition to the School Board's decision and perhaps for the first time the many groups that have splintered the community united behind the Federation. At a public meeting attended by some 2,000 members, representatives of the School Board admitted they had acted on bad advice and offered the Parents

Federation the same facilities as the Church/Hellenic Community. The demand that permission be withdrawn from the latter organization could not be met as a contract had been signed.

The strategy then became one of registering as many students as possible. Despite the continuous harassment from the pulpit, the support for the Parent's Federation became wide-spread and by the Fall, there were classes in some twenty-five schools. Significantly much support came from outside of the "ghetto-area" of the ethnic community, as for many, the Federation offered the first viable alternative to the Hellenic Community. By December, it was apparent that there was no competition and many of the teachers and the students previously registered with the Hellenic Community changed their allegiance.

While the struggle with the Hellenic Community had absorbed much of the time and energy of the Parents Federation, they were active in several other areas. During the summer, a French program involved some 300 children in activities that were designed to expose the participants to the dynamic culture of the francophone majority.

Through the pressure applied to local city aldermen and the School Board, the Parents Federation was successful in having a school yard that had been converted to a city parking lot returned to its original purpose. A brief, outlining the problems that existed at the local schools and recommending a series of solutions was presented to the School Board. Some of the recommendations were followed-up and the Parents Federation is presently conducting a study in conjunction with the McGill School of Architecture that will result in a more precise definition of the problems and recommendations for appropriate actions.

B. After many frustrating delays, due in the main to the difficulties of finding suitable premises in the area and the great volume of bureaucratic red tape, the Park Avenue Coop. Day Care Centre was begun. Although the delays made it difficult to sustain parent involvement and interest, the support given as the Centre became closer to a reality and the response, in terms of enrollment, indicated that the Centre was of importance to a large section of the population.

An interesting contrast was developed with this and another day care centre opened some eight blocks away by the Junior League. This latter effort involved no local participation and had no ability to communicate with the surrounding immigrant population.

Its failure to attract more than 12-15 children in contrast to that of the Park Avenue Centre which had a waiting list of 20 children three days after it opened indicated the success of citizen involvement. Although attempts were made to refer parents to the other centre, the attitude was generally "this is our centre not that one, we will wait".

The Centre is presently administered by the Family Services Association, and the Y.M.C.A. which is the leasee of the premises. All staff have been recruited from the local community and all are bilingual, that is, speak either French and English or one of the two plus Greek. A continuing grant has been secured from the Quebec Government.

The Project has continued to work with the parents of the children involved and it is anticipated that a parents association will take full responsibility within a year.

C. As with the above operation, considerable frustration has developed as a result of the inability to have a clinic become operational. The confused state of medical administration in the province, the hesitancy on the part of local hospitals and doctors, and the Project staff being unable to devote sufficient time are the causes of the frustration.

However, considerable progress has been made in having local hospitals become aware and sensitive to the particular problems of the ethnic community. Outstanding in this regard is the Allan Memorial, the psychiatric hospital, as it is making considerable effort to adjust so that it may better serve the acute problems of the immigrant population. A team, consisting of a psychiatrist and a social worker, is now working with a

team of indigenous workers in the community. In addition to working with cases, the team is training the indigenous workers to identify and assist those in need of help. Within the next month, it is anticipated that the nucleus of a clinic will become operational.

D. The monthly magazine Echo has continued to be a major vehicle in the approach to the community. Funding for one year has been secured from a private foundation and advertising is now being sought.

The essential information conveyed by the magazine has been instrumental in creating a greatly increased awareness of the society in which the immigrants live, and of the rights and protections that are provided by the law. It has, in addition, played a major role in developing the understanding of the support that exists for unified communities and in the increasing local identification with the society at large.

Echo, as a concept for communicating with isolated ethnic groups has attracted considerable interest from the provincial and federal governments and the United Nations.

E. Mention was made earlier of the summer French program conducted jointly by the Hellenic Parents Federation and the Project (A). Although this program was aimed primarily at elementary school-age children, specific programs were developed in the evenings to involve parents. The response to the program was widespread and enquiries are now being made as to whether it will be available this summer.

Project staff have taken all opportunities to develop awareness and understanding of the Quebec situation. Considerable space has been devoted to the subject in Echo and French is the first language of the Day Care Centre.

A program designed to teach immigrants French and to have them examine their role vis-a-vis Quebec society prior to their interacting with a francophone group that has examined their attitudes towards immigrants has been funded by the Federal Government and will be initiated in the spring. Representatives of the Workers Association and the Parents Federation are presently contacting the Catholic School Commission in order to develop their own French language classes.

F. Consumer education has been a major feature of the magazine Echo, and has resulted in cases with this orientation becoming a large part of the problems handled by the information and referral service and the legal aid clinic.

G. As a result of the number of employment related cases handled by the legal aid clinic, a series of articles on the labor code and legislation protecting specific workers was published in Echo. The response was overwhelming and as a result the Hellenic Workers Association was formed.

This organization presently sees as its main function the supplying of information to its members. It has contacted the Quebec Labor Federation and is now able to call upon its lawyers. A series of seminars, conducted by union leaders, dealing with labor law and unionization is planned for this summer.

Contact has also been established with the minimum wage commission and a major blitz on local enterprises acting outside of the law is being planned for the spring.

H. The information and referral service has developed in conjunction with the increasing wide-spread knowledge and support for the Project. In excess of an average of 100 cases are handled each week, many requiring follow-up.

This increasing demand on the Project staff's time has made it difficult for a balance to be maintained between essential casework and the development work which is the main objective. The failure of the social agencies to provide locally based case workers has not assisted the maintenance of a balance. The failure too of the Quebec Immigration Department to recognize that the Parents Federation and the Workers Association, and not the Hellenic Community, represent Greek immigrants has to this point made it difficult for the Project to respond to the increasing demand for individual services.

I. As an extension of the information and referral service, legal aid was initiated early in the summer. Initially, the service manned by one voluntary lawyer, one afternoon a week, took the form of legal advice only. However, the urgency of many of the cases made it impossible to restrict the service in this way.

In the past ten months approximately 450 cases have been handled by the lawyer and the need for extended services becomes more apparent day by day. In this regard the Quebec Bar Association has been contacted and the services of a second lawyer should be available to the community within a month.

Working conditions, housing problems, sales contracts (door to door salesmen) and family problems cover the bulk of the cases handled.

J. Due to the increased demand on staff time and the limitations imposed by a lack of facilities, no formal tutorial program was initiated this year. However, local college students have developed a network of tutoring relationships through-out the community. This method which makes use of the homes of the children is probably the most satisfactory method of assisting small groups of children.

K. Recreational programs apart from those that took place last summer (see E) have been developed around the after-school language and culture classes. Creative arts, drama, and folk dancing have become major features of the program.

Plans are now being developed for a more extensive recreational program this summer. These will include family picnics, camping for children 9-12 years, and swimming, in addition to the above programs.

L. While as yet no co-ordinating council exists, the necessity and the concept are now widely accepted. An important step over the past year has been the formation of a federation of Greek regional associations. This organization along with the Hellenic Parents and Guardians Federation, is representative of the Greek immigrants and together they will provide the base for a truly representative council.

To appreciate the difficulty in developing such a council one must understand the deep divisions that exist within this ethnic community. That many residents now identify the need for a council and are prepared to work towards it becoming a reality is an indication of the success of the Project in placing itself beyond the divisive forces but in direct contact with the residents.

M. Several efforts have been made to make classes more readily available to local residents, but they have not, however, been successful. There is undoubtedly a greater desire to learn language skills, however, there seems to be a reluctance to opt into what are viewed as courses run by an outside organization. In this regard it will be of interest to see the response when financing is achieved to allow local organizations run their own courses (see C). If the experience of the Day Care Centre and other occasions is repeated, the classes will be highly successful.

N. A series of public lectures were held throughout the year. Topics ranged from the Pill to the F.L.Q., to meetings with M.P.'s. Average attendance 200 persons.

5. Work Plan for next Fiscal Year, 1971-72.

1. Work will continue with the Hellenic Parents' Federation specifically to strengthen the participation of the local school committees and to ensure more direct action in attempts to improve the standard of local education.
2. The Day Care Parents' Association will be strengthened to the point where it will assume full responsibility for the management of the Centre. This Association will in all probability join forces with the Parents Federation.
3. Work will continue on the Medical Centre so that it becomes a reality early in the year. A major aspect will be developing local citizen control and defining the limitations of the professionals involved.
4. The monthly magazine, Echo, will continue to disperse basic information to the local population. It will be developed to become a source of income for the community.

5. The information and referral service will continue and will be linked to legal aid services and casework agencies.
6. The Workers Association will be developed so that it becomes a representative body able to deal with injustices reported by its membership.
7. Legal Aid Services will be consolidated and funds will be made available for court appearances.
8. Programs that will promote and encourage understanding and contact with the francophone majority will be developed. The various community organizations will be encouraged to develop their own French language programs.
9. Work will continue with the Hellenic Students Associations so that they will contribute to the development and direction of the community.
10. Locally based organizations will be encouraged to develop children's recreational programs. The Parents Federation will conduct a summer camp in the Laurentians.
11. The series of public information lectures will continue. Topics will be identified by the participants.
12. A co-ordinating group consisting of representatives from local organizations will be developed. This group will eventually take over the Project's programs and will become responsible for the raising of funds and community planning.
13. Greater emphasis will be placed on the development of indigenous leadership. Exposure to the values and philosophy of community involvement must be an essential aspect of this program.
14. Programs will be developed in conjunction with local women. The women presently have been least effected by the Project as they are completely immersed in their cultural role.

6. General;

There is no doubt that the Project is now identified as part of the local community. The lack of trust, the fear and the hesitancy to get involved, all behaviours that a year or so ago made the task of the staff extremely difficult have to a large extent been overcome. This is reflected in the greater involvement in the affairs of the Project and the increasingly widespread support for its goals and objectives.

Observations from those outside of the community indicate that there is now a form of cohesiveness that did not exist previously. This developing cohesiveness or unity is reflected in the general response of the community to specific problems: A response that is now based on a common concern.

Simultaneously with the increased group identification there has developed an increased interest and awareness in the affairs that operate outside of the ethnic group. Much of this can be traced to the fact that the local population has a reliable source of information in Echo, the monthly magazine. The emphasis placed on informing the local population of the total society in which they now exist has been deliberate and the response to this date indicates that it is playing a key role in the integration process.

Attitudes on the part of other groups within the geographical community have undergone considerable change. Much of this can be attributed to the changed perspective in which they view the local Greek population, which dominates the area. The increased unity and action on the part of the Greeks has resulted in their gaining a greater measure of respect and in addition other groups have come to gain from the actions that have brought improvements to the local area. The base is now being developed for greater interaction.

Mention must be made in this report of the pressure and harassment that has been applied to the Project staff. Threatening telephone calls and interfering with cars are instances that have occurred in the past six months. The source of these actions is difficult to identify but it can be explained by the success of the Project in effectively developing a consciousness amongst the ethnic population. A consciousness that makes it difficult for power-brokers and criminal elements to act as ruthlessly and with the same disrespect as they had done previously.

The Project, which is now at the mid-point of its planned existence, has been successful in initiating a process which is resulting in the development of unity and an increased comprehension of the factors and nature of the total society. Conditions which have exploited and/or suppressed the local population are now being challenged while at the same time the fears that prevented contact with life outside of the "ghetto" are now beginning to erode.

The method of work promoted by the Mile End West Project has resulted in a great amount of work being done with other organizations and agencies. A list of these organizations, some 90 of them, is included in Appendix 1.

The Project's demonstration of work with ethnic groups has created wide interest. The United Nations and individuals from several countries have communicated with the Project in order to gain more information.

Agency and Departmental Involvement

Day Care

1. Family Service Association
2. Quebec Govmt. Dept. of Family and Social Welfare
3. Montreal City Planning, Health and Licensing Depts.
4. McGill, School of Architecture
5. Montreal Diet Dispensary
6. Children's Clinic, Allan Memorial
7. Several Foundations and Agencies
8. Jewish Allied Services
9. Six (6) Day Care Centres

French Summer Camp

1. Federal Govmt., Citizenship Branch
2. Quebec Govmt. Immigration and Education Depts.
3. Protestant School Board of Greater Montreal
4. City of Montreal, Parks Dept.
5. University of Montreal, Education Faculty
6. Local M.P.'s

Information and Referral, Legal Aid & Case Work

1. Lawyers
2. Bar Association
3. S.A.V.I.
4. Quebec Govmt.
 - Immigration Dept.
 - Family & Social Welfare Dept.
 - Minimum Wage Commission
 - Medicare
5. Federal Govmt.
 - Immigration
 - Manpower
 - Health and Welfare
 - Unemployment Commission
 - Consumer Affairs
 - Citizenship
6. Hospitals
 - Children's Allan, Montreal General,
 - Royal Victoria, Jewish General, Hotel
 - Dieu, St. Justine's.
7. Better Business Bureau--Montreal & Toronto
8. Family Service Association
9. City Welfare Department
10. A.C.E.F.
11. City Health Dept.
12. City Rental Board
13. Conseil de Development Sociale
14. Montreal Council of Social Agencies.

Hellenic Parents and Guardians

1. Protestant School Board of Greater Montreal
2. " " " " St. Martin
3. Quebec Govmt., Immigration Dept.
4. Federal Govmt., Citizenship Branch
5. City of Montreal

Echo

1. All Montreal Media
2. Canadian Scene
3. Federal Govmt., Citizenship Branch
4. " " Postal Dept.
5. Quebec Govmt.
6. Printing Companies
7. Foundations
8. Gendron Commission

Summer Camping

1. Federal Govmt. Citizenship Branch
2. Quebec Govmt., Immigration Department
3. Federal Govmt., Dept. of Defence

Workers Association

1. Lawyers
2. Legal Aid Inc.
3. C.N.T.U.
4. Quebec Federation of Labour
5. Quebec Minimum Wage Commission
6. Quebec Labor Department
7. McGill Faculty of Law
8. Federal Government, Human Rights Division

Learning Clinic

1. Allan Memorial
2. McGill, Faculty of Education
3. Protestant School Board of Greater Montreal
4. Montreal Children's Hospital

Community Clinic--Mental Health Project

1. Local G.P.'s
2. Medicare
3. Royal Victoria Hospital
4. Children's Hospital
5. Jewish General Hospital
6. Hertzl Clinic
7. Allan Memorial
8. Mental Health Association. (....cont. next page)

9. Hotel Dieu
10. Quebec Family & Social Welfare
11. City Health Dept.
12. Victorian Order of Nurses
13. McGill, Faculty of Medicine
14. Architects.

Other---General

1. Sir George Williams Univ. Sociology
2. University of Montreal
3. Indiana University
4. Federal Government, Research Sections of National Health and Welfare and Citizenship
5. Federation of Greek Societies
6. Jewish Immigration Aid and Services
7. Institutue of Urban Studies, University of Winnipeg
8. Foundations
9. International House, Toronto
10. Montreal Junior League
11. U.N.E.S.C.O.
12. Canadian Association of Neighbourhood Services
13. Company of Young Canadians
14. University Settlement